Territory businesses will soon be able to appeal a taxation or mineral royalty assessment via an independent Tribunal as an alternative to going to the Supreme Court, Treasurer Syd Stirling said today.

Mr Stirling said, in keeping with a Budget 2004 commitment, the Government was establishing an independent Taxation and Royalty Appeals Tribunal as an alternative and cheaper dispute resolution process.

“This is part of Government’s ongoing efforts to support and assist Territory business,” Mr Stirling said.

“For people dissatisfied with a stamp duty, payroll tax or mineral royalty objection decision, appealing to the Supreme Court can be a very costly and lengthy exercise.

“We want to make it easier and cheaper for businesses to resolve taxation and mineral royalty disputes by ensuring our system is flexible and accessible.

“To keep costs down, the Tribunal will, where possible, review most matters based on paper evidence, saving businesses from having to pay for costly legal representation.

“Legislation will be introduced in Parliament this week to establish the tribunal, as well as provide a uniform framework for objections and appeals for matters under the Taxation (Administration) Act, the Payroll Tax Act and the Mineral Royalty Act.

“The amendments will include new procedures giving 60 days for objections to be lodged as opposed to the current 30 days that applies for stamp duty and mineral royalty matters.”

Mr Stirling said the Tribunal and new procedures were being established in response to concerns raised with Government by the business and industry communities about the current appeals process.

“We are establishing the new system in response to those concerns and following consultation with industry and professional organisations,” he said.

“It is expected that the new objection and appeal procedures will be in place early in 2005.”